

Message Text

SECRET

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43

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 241320Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1867

INFO AMEMBASSY NICOSIA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 7649

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, CY, LE, US, ASEC

SUBJECT: TERRORISM: LEBANESE GROUP DEMANDS FOR HOSTAGE RELEASE

REF: STATE 236825

1. UPON RECEIPT REFTEL, CHARGE ATTEMPTED TO CALL COLONEL MICHEL NASSIF, SENIOR AIDE TO PRESIDENT SARKIS. ALTHOUGH CHARGE UNABLE REACH NASSIF PERSONALLY, (THIS IS FIRST DAY OF SARKIS PRESIDENCY AND HE IS DEEPLY INVOLVED IN PREPARATORY MEETINGS FOR RESUMPTION OF LEBANESE/PALESTINIAN/ SYRIAN/ARAB LEAGUE TALKS), HIS OFFICE SENT COURIER TO EMBASSY WHO PICKED UP LETTER FROM CHARGE TO NASSIF AT 1330 LOCAL TIME. LETTER INCLUDED POINTS LISTED PARA 3 REFTEL AND ENCLOSED TEXT OF EXTORTION LETTER. COURIER PROMISED LETTER WOULD BE DELIVERED TO COLONEL NASSIF ASAP.

2. DATT MET WITH LAA CHIEF OF STAFF MANSUR FROM 1000-1100 REGARDING SUBJECT (FORMER G-2 CONTACT HAS BEEN REPLACED). MANSUR HAS NO INFORMATION CONCERNING ABDUCTION OF FOREIGNERS IN AREA UNDER LAA CONTROL AND STRONGLY DOUBTS THAT THIS COULD HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT LAA'S KNOWLEDGE. MANSUR ALSO HAS NO KNOWLEDGEUF "RON HABLEN ARBOZEN INSTITUTION," BUT COMMENTED THAT IT WAS NOT LEBANESE AND QUESTIONED A FOREIGN ORGANIZATION'S ABILITY TO MOVE AT WILL IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. MANSUR DID COMMENT THAT STRANGE THINGS HAVE HAPPENED IN HIS

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COUNTRY OF LATE.

3. WITHOUT HESITATION, MANSUR AGREED TO PUT OUT FEELERS IN WEST BEIRUT AND SOUTHERN LEBANON TO DETERMINE IF ANY AMERICANS OR EUROPEANS HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED. HE IMMEDIATELY SAW THE NEED OF SECRECY IN THIS MATTER AND WILL PERSONALLY MONITOR THE OPERATIGF. LAA G-2 IS TO CONTACT DATT LATER THIS AFTERNOON WITH ANYTHING THEY HAVE LEARNED.

4. RSO O'BRIEN MET HIS PLO CONTACT ABOUT 1330 LOCAL TIME SEP 24 AND CARRIED OUT P STRUCTIONS PARA 5 RSFTTEL. PLO OFFICER SAID HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF RHAIL, KNEW OF NO AMERICANS OR ANY WESTERN EUROPEANS BEING HELD HOSTAGE IN WEST BEIRUT OR SOUTH LEBANON AND SUSPECTED A HOAX BY "EASTERNS" TO CAUSE TROUBLE AND DISTRACT USG AT CRITICAL PERIOD IN LEBANON. HE UNDERSTOOD, HOWEVER, THAT WE MUST TAKE MATTER SERIOUSLY AND AGREED HIS SECURITY PEOPLE WOULD CHECK IT OUT. RSO SAID HE WOULD CALL AFTERNOON SEP 25 FOR STATUS REPORT.

4. WE ARE NOW INFORMED THAT NEITHER AL ANWAR NOR AN NAHAR WILL PUBLISH TOMORROW, SEP 25.
LANE

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NNN

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